What is PCA?
- PCA stands for Patient Controlled Analgesia. Analgesia is a medical word that means pain relief.
- The PCA pump is used to give yourself pain relief medicine (usually morphine). This helps to stop the pain you may feel after your operation.

Why is pain treatment important?
- Research shows that you will experience fewer problems after surgery if your pain is well controlled. You are also likely to recover more quickly and be discharged sooner.
- Without pain management, you will find it difficult to get out of bed, walk and take deep breaths or cough. This can lead to problems such as chest infection, blood clots in your legs and bedsores.

How does the PCA work?
- Using the PCA pump you can give yourself pain relief medicine whenever you need it. The PCA machine is programmed for the painkiller your doctor has ordered.
- You will be provided with a handset which has a button. When you press the button the pain relieving drug is delivered directly via an intravenous drip.
- After pressing the button, wait a few minutes for the medicine to work. Even if you press the button several times over, the pump will only release medication when it is time to do so.

Do not wait until your pain becomes unbearable to press the button

How will I know if I have had enough pain relief?
- You may have little pain and be able to move around easily. You should be able to take a big breath, and cough without too much pain.
- The PCA is meant to help you control your pain and not to help you sleep. If you feel sleepy, you have had enough medicine - don’t use the button again unless the pain comes back.
How long will I need to use the PCA pump?

- This varies depending on the type of surgery. You will be assessed by our Acute Pain Service (APS) before the PCA is stopped. When you are able to eat and drink the APS will change you over to an equal dose of pain medicine in tablet form.

- As time passes you will need less and less pain relief medicine.

**Only the patient is allowed to press the button on the PCA machine**

Will the doctors and nurses know how much pain I have?

- Yes, nurses caring for you will ask you regularly while you are in hospital about your pain. The doctors and nurses will ask you to rate your pain using a score out of 10.

![Pain Score 0-10 Numerical Rating](image)

What side effects could I have?

You may experience one or more side effects:

- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Hallucinations
- Constipation
- Itching
- Nausea and vomiting
- Slow breathing

The above side effects can be treated. It is important to inform your nurse or doctor if you experience any of these.

What should I tell my nurse about?

- If your pain is getting worse.
- If you cannot sleep or move around because it hurts.
- If you cannot take a big breath or cough easily because it hurts.
- If you have pain somewhere else, such as your legs or chest.

**The Acute Pain Service is available to review your PCA at any time**